by the Indian Air Force for commissioning for air traffic control duties:

(d) the number af candidates who were interviewed; and

(e) what are the reasons for which these women candidates have not been appointed for the jobs for which they were selected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) A letter to the Editor under the caption "IAF has let women down" has been seen by Government.

(b) (c) and (e) A statement is enclosed. (See below)

(d) No woman candidate was interviewed for ATC duties.

Statement

IAF had not invited applications for commissioning for Air Trafic Control duties as alleged by the author. Government sanction stands already issued for induction of women candidates on Short Service Commission basis, for various Ground Duty Branches (including ATC duties except for the Fighter| Bomber stream of the Flying Branch. The officers of the Administration Branch of the IAF are put on Air Traffic Control duties after relevant training. Advertisements were issued by IAF for induction of women candidates into the Administration Branch for purely administrative duties. Legistics and Accounts Benches for 6 SSE(W). Course commencing January 1995. After scrutiny of applications, a large number of women candidates who had applied for entrance into the Admiinstration Branch but could not make it to the merit list, were available. There were shortfall in the induction of male candidates fai ATC duties. Therefore, a proposal was mooted in the Air Headquarter to include some af these women candidates, low in merit, in the 4—SSC (ATC| FC) Course for male candidates commencing in Februady|March 1995. At this initial stage of the proposal, some af these women candidates were informed that they were being considered for appointment for ATC duties. However, on a subsequent detailed examination of the proposal, Air Headquarters came to the conclusion that such a move would create serious legal and administrative problems of interse seniority. The 4-SSC (ATC|FC) Courses for male candidates was for 12 weeks whereas 6-SSC(W) Course for women candidates was for 52 weeks. Therefore, wamen candidates low in merit passing out from the 4-SSC (ATC|FC) Course of 12 weeks, would become senior to the selected women candidates who were high in merit as they would have been commissioned on completian of 52 weeks' training. Moreover, since induction of women for ATC|FC duties had not been advertised, it would have deprived other eligible and desirous candidates a chance to apply for such course. Therefore, Air Headquarters dropped the proposal and intimated the concerned women candidates.

Import of spares for Defence Services

606. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH:
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:
Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are facing any problems in the import of spares for Defence Services, particularly from Russia and if so, what are the details thereof and how Government propose to tide over these problems.

(b) whether Government propose in set up a comprehensive overhauling project for MIG-29 aircraft by the Air Force despite the uncertain situation over the supply of critical spares from Russia; and

(c) if so, how the requirements of spares for the overhauling projects are likely to be met?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI

MALLIKARJUN): (a) Consequent upon the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, there was a degree of dislocation in our defence transactians. Government have since received assurances and expressions of interest with regard to maintenance of cooperation with India in the defence sector from Russia, the primary successor State of the former Soviet Union. Continuous contact is being maintained to ensure a smooth flow of supplies. In this context, the Government of India has signed an Agreement of Defence Cooperation with the Government of the Russian Federation, on 28th January 1993, which includes a provision for guaranteed supply of Defence equipment related items/spare parts, product support and comprehensive services needed for maintenance, repairs, overhaul and modernisation.

(b) and (c) Overhaul facilities for MIG-29 aircraft are being set up in India with Russian assistance. Once this is completed our dependence on Russia will reduce to a considerable extent. Simultaneously, Government is also pursuing other measures to sustain defence imports from other sources and to strengthen the indigneous production facilities to ensure that the defence requirements of the country are fully met.

Indo-US cooperation on defence matters

607. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:
SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI:

SHRIMATI MIRA DAS:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently entered into Defence Cooperation with the USA; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof, stating the areas of Indo-US defence cooperation and the options open to India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) and (b) During the visit of the US Defence Secretary to India in January 1995, an 'Agreed Minute' use' on Defence relations between India and the USA was signed. It provides for civilian to civilian inter action, ser. vice-to-service cooperation and co-operation in the field of research and development. This is in line with Government stand that steps towards improvement of our bilateral defence relations with the US, will be taken in a manner consistent with our national interest.

Unsatisfactory management support by BEML to VIL

608. SHRI G. Y. KRISHNAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction has criticised the public sector Bharat Earth Movers Ltd. (BEML) for its "Highly unsatisatory" management support to its subsidiary Vigyan Industries Ltd. (VIL); and

(b) if so, what steps Government proposes to take to improve the role of BEML as a holding company or alternatively to revive the VIL as an independent unit, as per draft rehabilitation scheme approved by the BIFR?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) and (b) The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction in its draft rehabilitation scheme for Vigyan Industries Ltd (VIL) published in February 1995 for inviting objections/suggestions has highlighted several reasons for sickness of VIL. These include, inter alia, outdated technology and old machinery, locational disadvantage, power shortage, under utilisation of capacity and inadequate management support extended by BEML (which has been contested by BEML). The Board has evolved a comprehensive rehabilitation package covering financial restructuring,